

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0603

March 20, 2020

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
1236 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
2468 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

Thank you for the work you and your staff are doing to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. As Congress develops subsequent bills to address the virus and mitigate against its public health and economic impacts, I am hearing daily from groups and companies in my district on their needs immediately and in the months ahead. I respectfully request that the items included below be prioritized as you work to develop the forthcoming bills to address the pandemic and support the individuals, groups, companies and industries that we have all come to rely on. I know that the needs in Colorado and across the country are far greater than those I have listed below as we continue to respond to COVID-19 and recover from this crisis. I look forward to continued engagement with you and your staff on these needs.

Rural Healthcare

- 1) **Long-term reauthorization of the Community Health Center Fund:** Community Health Centers (CHC) will play a vital role in our nation's COVID-19 response and Congress must provide long-term reauthorization of the CHC Fund. In 2019, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions reached a bipartisan agreement to provide 5 years of stable funding at \$4 billion annually for CHCs. I request that this reauthorization be included in the next coronavirus supplemental package.

- 2) **Direct Financial Support for CHCs to Keep Doors Open:** CHCs will face unprecedented staffing, supplies and equipment challenges in the weeks and months ahead. In order to ensure CHCs can meet the needs of their healthcare workers and their communities, CHCs will require direct financial support. I urge you to consider these needs in the next coronavirus supplemental and provide \$320 million to CHCs directly.
- 3) **Immediate direct financial support for Critical Access Hospitals:** As you know, Critical Access Hospitals (CAH) serve vulnerable populations and operate on extremely thin or non-existent profit margins. In fact, over twenty CAHs in Colorado operate on negative profit margins. CAHs in my district are continuing to perform elective surgeries so that they can keep their doors open. As pseudo-governmental entities, many CAHs do not have assets to pledge or may not be able to pledge future revenues as collateral for a line of credit. CAHs will require federal support in the form of either unsecured loans or direct infusions of cash.
- 4) **Medicare Telehealth Eligibility for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) and Rural Health Centers (RHC):** While the Trump Administration has taken important steps to expand telehealth service offerings for Medicare beneficiaries, the expanded authorities do not extend to FQHCs or RHCs. FQHCs and RHCs serve the populations that are most vulnerable to COVID-19 and must be able to offer telehealth services. Section 7 of the bipartisan, bicameral CONNECT for Health Act would allow FQHCs and RHCs to offer telehealth to their patients, and I request its inclusion in the next supplemental bill.
- 5) **Delay Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) Cuts:** As you know, many hospitals in rural America serve a large number of Medicaid and underserved patients. These hospitals are now choosing to delay elective surgeries so they can respond to the coronavirus crisis, and there is not room in their operating budgets to absorb DSH cuts. The current delay of scheduled DSH cuts expires on May 22, 2020. I request that DSH cuts be delayed until such time that the coronavirus pandemic is no longer a national emergency.

Economic Relief for Businesses

- 1) **Direct Financial Support and Loan Guarantee for all Severely Distressed Sectors:** State governors are taking decisive action to stop community spread of COVID-19. While much attention has been paid to the impact that COVID-19 has had on the airline and cruise industries, it is imperative to acknowledge the impact that mandated-closures have sector-wide. I encourage you to work with the Administration to identify all severely distressed sectors for the purposes of direct financial assistance and loan guarantees.

- 2) **Emergency Funding for Small Airports:** Small airports' critical role in our nation's aviation system cannot be forgotten as Congress develops upcoming stimulus packages. As you know, airports generally do not receive taxpayer funding, rather their revenues are almost entirely from rents and fees for use of the airport. With major airlines drastically cutting service, small airports will be faced with an untenable situation. Any stimulus package should include assistance for small airports.
- 3) **Waiver of Ski Area Fees and Enactment of Ski Area Fee Retention Act:** In the state of Colorado, Governor Polis ordered all ski areas to close in order to contain the spread of COVID-19, and the lack of public recreation at ski areas is undoubtedly having profound impacts on communities across the country. While ski areas operating on National Forest System land have already paid a portion of the fees they owe to the federal government for this year, waiving the fees for the remainder of the year will go a long way towards providing ski areas some relief during this uncertain time. Additionally, the outdoor recreation industry will play a vital role in economic recovery across the United States as we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis. Efficient federal permitting processes will be critical to allow ski areas to make needed investments in their communities. The Ski Area Fee Retention Act (H.R. 2509) will help streamline and expedite federal permitting by allowing the Forest Service to retain a portion of the ski area fees that are generated on the forest in order to process permits. H.R. 2509 should be included in any upcoming stimulus package.
- 4) **Qualified Improvement Property technical amendments:** Due to a drafting error in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, Qualified Investment Properties were rendered ineligible for full bonus depreciation because they were moved from a 15-year depreciation period to a 39.5-year period. I ask that you address this lingering issue in the next supplemental bill. Correcting this mistake will yield meaningful relief for struggling restaurants, grocery stores, and other businesses that form an integral part of our communities and employ millions.
- 5) **Temporary Access to 0% loans for small businesses and non-profits under the Small Business Administration's Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program (SBA EIDL):** My office continues to hear from small businesses and non-profits that will utilize the SBA EIDL program, however there remain concerns about the long-term impact that COVID-19 will have on their ability to meet their operating expenses. I request you consider offering SBA EIDL Loans to small businesses and non-profits at 0% while the COVID-19 pandemic remains a national crisis.
- 6) **Coronavirus Tribal Relief Fund:** By and large Indian tribal governments lack the taxing authority other governments have to generate revenues through income, property and other taxes. Instead, Indian tribes fund essential government services and programs through activities such as energy and mineral development, hospitality and tourism, forestry, gaming, parks and outdoor recreation. Tribes use revenues from these activities

to provide critical services to their members as well as to surrounding communities such as healthcare, elder and child care, nutrition and food programs, law enforcement, education, and many others. On top of that, tribal businesses employ thousands of people in many cases tribes are the largest employers in their regions. I request that you work to establish a Coronavirus Tribal Relief Fund within the Department of the Treasury, so the Secretary can allocate and distribute grant funding to tribes or tribally-owned entities based upon lost revenues during the COVID-19 crisis.

Miscellaneous

- 1) **Continuity of Mental Healthcare for Higher Education Students:** As you know, many colleges and universities have made the decision to end in-classroom programs and transition to telelearning. There are students across college campuses in the United States who receive mental healthcare on campus. It is my understanding that campus counseling staff do not have the ability to continue providing services for students who are now out of state. We must enact policy that provides flexibility in licensing to ensure campus counselors can provide continuity of care.
- 2) **Universal Charitable Giving Tax Deduction:** Americans come together in times of crisis, and we will undoubtedly see many people support the non-profit organizations and charities that will help the most vulnerable among us during this pandemic. A universal charitable giving tax deduction will help incentivize the type of support each of our communities will need as we navigate this crisis and lead to further economic growth as our communities recover.

The items I have included are by no means an exhaustive list of the policies we will need to enact and the support we will need to provide, but they are a start. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or my staff should you need more information on any of the items.

Sincerely,



Scott Tipton
Member of Congress

Cc:

Chairman John Yarmuth, House Committee on the Budget
Ranking Member Steve Womack, House Committee on the Budget

Chairwoman Nita M. Lowey, House Committee on Appropriations
Ranking Member Kay Granger, House Committee on Appropriations
Chairman Richard Neal, House Ways and Means Committee
Ranking Member Kevin Brady, House Ways and Means Committee
Chairman Bobby Scott, House Education and Labor Committee
Ranking Member Virginia Foxx, House Education and Labor Committee
Chairwoman Nydia M. Velázquez, House Committee on Small Business
Ranking Member Steve Chabot, House Committee on Small Business
Chairman Frank Pallone, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Ranking Member Greg Walden, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Chairman Raul Grijalva, House Natural Resources Committee
Ranking Member Rob Bishop, House Natural Resources Committee